

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

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R 091206Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8631

WHITE HOUSE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 07003

DEPT FOR A AND WE, VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE FOR
CAPTAIN HOWE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER) FR

SUBJECT: ROCHAMBEAU GRAVESIDE REMARKS

1. WE FIND OURSELVES TODAY AT THE GRAVESIDE OF A
MARSHAL OF FRANCE AND AN ARCHITECT OF AMERICAN
INDEPENDENCE. HIS LONG AND FULL LIFE, SPANNING TWO
REVOLUTIONS AND TWO CONTINENTS, YEARS OF WARS AND
MONTHS OF IMPRISONMENT BROUGHT HIM THE HIGHEST HONORS
TO WHICH A SOLDIER CAN ASPIRE. HE DIED AT AGE 82 AS
RICH IN RECOGNITION AS IN YEARS. YET, PARADOXICALLY,
THOUGH HE SPENT ONLY TWO OF HIS FOUR-SCORE YEARS IN
OUR COUNTRY AND SPOKE NOT A WORD OF OUR LANGUAGE, HIS
NAME MAY BE MORE REVERED, AND MORE OFTEN INVOKED, IN
THE UNITED STATES THAN IN HIS NATIVE FRANCE.

2. BUT IF THE NAME OF ROCHAMBEAU IS CITED MORE OFTEN
ON OUR SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC THAN YOURS, IT IS BECAUSE
HIS IMPACT ON OUR HISTORY WAS MORE DECISIVE. HOW
CAN WE APPROXIMATE IN FRENCH TERMS THE HISTORIC
SIGNIFICANCE OF ROCHAMBEAU'S ARRIVAL IN NEWPORT IN
1780 AT THE HEAD OF HIS 6000-MAN FRENCH EXPEDITIONARY
FORCE? THE CLOSEST PARALLEL IN FRENCH HISTORY WOULD
BE WITH THE NORMANDY LANDINGS IN 1944. LIKE FRANCE
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IN 1944, THE AMERICAN COLONIES COULD HARDLY HAVE

LIBERATED THEMSELVES FROM THE OCCUPYING POWER WITHOUT FOREIGN INTERVENTION. IN 1780 OUR FEISTY BUT POORLY EQUIPPED ARMIES, OFFICERED LARGELY BY INEXPERIENCED AMATEURS, WERE BARELY HOLDING THEIR OWN. SINCE THE MINUTEMEN HAD FIRED OFF THEIR 'SHOTS HEARD ROUND THE WORLD' IN APRIL 1775, FIVE YEARS OF INDECISIVE HOSTILITIES HAD PASSED -- THE SAME TIME LAPSE AS BETWEEN 1939 AND 1944. BY 1780, THE AMERICANS WERE WONDERING ANXIOUSLY AND IMPATIENTLY WHEN, AND EVEN IF, THEIR GREAT ALLY WOULD ARRIVE. IN 1944, THE FRENCH WERE GNAWED BY THE SAME IMPATIENCE AND DOUBT. AND BOTH THE NEWPORT AND THE NORMANDY LANDINGS WERE THE BEGINNING OF THE END; DECISIVE VICTORY WAS TO FOLLOW A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AFTER ROCHAMBEAU'S REGIMENTS SPLASHED ASHORE AT NEWPORT, AND EISENHOWER'S AT ARROMANCHES.

3. ROCHAMBEAU WAS ONE OF THOSE MEN WHO WAIT IN THE RANKS FOR HISTORY TO CALL. RATHER THAN PURSUING THEIR DESTINY, THEY ARE PURSUED BY IT. IN NORMAL TIMES SUCH MEN FULFILL THEIR DUTIES SCRUPULOUSLY, CARVE OUT HONORABLE CAREERS, AND RETIRE IN DIGNIFIED ANONYMITY -- MEN SUPERIOR TO THEIR FATES.

4. BUT THESE WERE NOT NORMAL TIMES; AND WHEN HISTORY TURNED TO ROCHAMBEAU, HE WAS READY. A SOLDIER SINCE HE WAS SIXTEEN, HE HAD FOUGHT HONORABLY IN THE GERMAN WARS, EQUALLY READY, IN THE WORDS OF HIS EPITAPH, 'A PROTEGER LES RETRAITES ET A DECIDER LES VICTOIRES.' AS COMMANDER AT THE BATTLE OF KLOSTERCAMP OF THE MOST FAMOUS REGIMENT OF HIS DAY, THE AUVERGNE, HE EXECUTED WHAT A LATER HISTORIAN WOULD CALL "AN OFFENSIVE RETREAT" WHICH TURNED DEFEAT TO VICTORY. AFTER THE SEVEN YEARS WAR HE WAS CALLED TO PARIS TO REORGANIZE THE FRENCH MILITARY STRUCTURE. HE CONCEIVED THE 'VOLTIGEUR' REGIMENTS WITH WHICH NAPOLEON WAS LATER TO SPEARHEAD HIS MARCH ACROSS EUROPE. BY 1780, HE HAD ATTAINED THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL. HIS DOGGED PURPOSE AND STEADFAST DEVOTION TO DUTY HAD BECOME BYWORDS THROUGHOUT THE FRENCH ARMY AND COURT.

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5. WHEN ACTIVE INTERVENTION IN THE AMERICAN REBELLION WAS DECIDED, ROCHAMBEAU WAS THE OBVIOUS CHOICE TO COMMAND THE FRENCH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. AT 55 HIS JUDGEMENT AND MILITARY SKILLS HAD BEEN TESTED AND PROVEN ON THE BATTLE FIELD. HE WAS SUPPLE ENOUGH TO SERVE AS SECOND IN COMMAND TO WASHINGTON, FIRM ENOUGH TO HOLD IN CHECK THE YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASMS OF THE

IMPETUOUS YOUNG NOBLEMEN EARNING THEIR SPURS IN THE
AMERICAN CAMPAIGN. SANG-FROID, FINESSE AND AUTHORITY

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8632

WHITE HOUSE

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 07003

WERE HIS. HE KNEW JUST THE PROPER PATERNAL TONE IN WHICH TO ADDRESS A LETTER TO THE ARDENT, IMPATIENT AND INDISPENSABLE LAFAYETTE: FROM 'LE VIEUX PERE ROCHAMBEAU A SON CHER FILS LAFAYETTE.' MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE KNEW HOW TO WIN THE RESPECT AND AFFECTION OF WASHINGTON AND HIS AMERICAN OFFICERS. AS ONE OF ROCHAMBEAU'S YOUNG SUBORDINATES, COUNT FERSON, WROTE TO HIS FATHER IN SWEDEN, "C'ETAIT LE SEUL HOMME QUI FUT CAPABLE...DE MAINTENIR LA PARFAITE HARMONIE ENTRE LES DEUX NATIONS SI DIFFERENTES PAR LEURS MOEURS ET PAR LEUR LANGAGE." AT THE SURRENDER CEREMONIES AT YORKTOWN, ROCHAMBEAU REBUFFED BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO YIELD THEIR SWORDS TO HIM; WITH A SWEEP OF HIS ARM HE DIRECTED THE VANQUISHED BRITISH OFFICERS TOWARDS WASHINGTON. THIS INDISPENSABLE HARMONY BETWEEN THE TWO COMMANDERS WAS PERHAPS ROCHAMBEAU'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY. IN LOUIS XVI'S CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO ROCHAMBEAU THE MONARCH STRESSED THAT "L'ESPRIT DE CONCILIATION QUE VOUS AVEZ APPORTE DANS TOUTES LES OPERATIONS QUE VOUS AVEZ CONCERTEES AVEC LE GENERAL WASHINGTON, ET ENFIN LE

SUCCEES QUI LES A COURONNES, NE LAISSENT RIEN A DESIRER
A SA MAJESTE."

6. BUT ROCHAMBEAU'S CAREER DOES NOT STOP AT YORKTOWN.
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UPON HIS RETURN TO FRANCE HE WENT ON TO BECOME THE
LAST MARSHAL OF THE MONARCHY AND THE FIRST MARSHAL
OF THE REVOLUTION. BUT IT IS HIS CONTRIBUTION TO
OUR HISTORY RATHER THAN TO YOURS THAT I SALUTE TODAY.
WHEN IN JULY 1917 GENERAL PERSHING ANNOUNCED THE
ARRIVAL IN FRANCE OF AN AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY CORPS,
HIS AIDE-DE-CAMP, COLONEL STANTON CRIED: "LAFAYETTE
NOUS VOILA." STANTON COULD HAVE, AND IN HISTORICAL
FAIRNESS SHOULD HAVE, ADDED THE NAME OF ROCHAMBEAU.
OUR CONGRESS WAS GUILTY OF NO SUCH OVERSIGHT WHEN,
IN OCTOBER 1781, IT RESOLVED THAT THE "THANKS OF THE
UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED BE PRESENTED TO
HIS EXCELLENCY, THE COUNT OF ROCHAMBEAU FOR THE
CORDIALITY, ZEAL, JUDGEMENT AND FORTITUDE WITH WHICH
HE SECONDED AND ADVANCED THE PROGRESS OF THE ALLIED
ARMY AGAINST THE BRITISH GARRISONS IN YORK."
195 YEARS LATER I REAFFIRM ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE THIS RESOLUTION OF THANKS; I SALUTE ONCE
AGAIN THAT "CORDIALITY, ZEAL, JUDGEMENT AND
FORTITUDE" WHICH NOT ONLY SERVED THE BEST INTERESTS
OF FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES, BUT ULTIMATELY THE
CAUSE AND IDEA OF LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

7. THANK YOU.
RUSH

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